

ISLAM

Why is prayer not accepted?

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Some people once asked a venerable elder: "What is the reason why we ask from God, but our prayers do not get answered?" The elderly gentleman replied that this is because you people ask of God what you are not prepared to give to other human beings. He explained by saying that you pray to God to save you from the oppression of those who oppress you, however, when one of you achieves dominance over people, you do not abstain from oppressing them. Similarly, you ask God to ensure the safety and security of your wealth and lives, but when you get the opportunity you make violation of another person's life and property permissible for yourself. You seek an honourable life from God, but when you attain power over somebody you do not shy away from dishonouring them. You want God to protect you from the conspiracies of enemy nations, but if you develop some differences with a person, you do not rest content in conspiring to uproot him.

The truth is the necessary condition for acceptance of one's prayer is that the seeker be extremely sincere in his request. The prayer should be a call which represents his entire personality, an outpouring of his being, and not only some words that he has uttered from his lips. When a person is sincere, his life becomes devoid of contradictions—there remains no difference between what he prays for and what he does in his real life. For example, to persecute others and be unjust in one's own area of influence, while to protest against another's oppression is a contradiction which points to the lack of earnestness of one's stance.

For the acceptability of one's prayer, it is crucial that a person gives to others in his real life what he seeks from God in his entreaty. If he seeks mercy and blessing for his own self from God, then he too, in his dealings with people, should be an embodiment of compassion and kindness.